



2008 State of the County Address
Mayor Charmaine Tavares
February 26, 2008

CREATING OUR FUTURE

Council Chair Hokama, distinguished Council Members, Senators and State Representatives, honored guests and citizens of Maui County –

Aloha Kakou.

I would also like to acknowledge my mother, Mrs. Harriet Tavares, who joins us today.

And my department directors and deputy directors who are members of my cabinet. Please stand and be recognized.

Mahalo, Richard Hoopii, for your wonderful music today and congratulations on your Grammy award for Best Hawaiian Album!

Thank you, Rick Yamamoto of Troop 18, for leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Congratulations on your new rank of Eagle Scout!

I am honored to come before you this morning to present my second State of the County Address. It is indeed a tremendous honor to serve as your Mayor.

Maui County is a wonderful place. And I know we are all grateful for who we are and what we share as a community. For not only do we share land and water and basic social networks, but we also share responsibility, respect and aloha for Maui Nui.

It is our responsibility to meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. We must take care of our home so that it will be able

to sustain those who live here after us. This means contributing more than we take so that there is enough for the future.

These values are universal, but they are especially important in an island community like ours. We have a shared responsibility to think and act for the long term. Our home is part of a vibrant economic system, but we must balance short-term economic gains against their potential sustainability. I believe we can do that if we understand how important it is to do so, and if we make a commitment to base our actions on these values. For they will guide us as we face the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century.

Building Relationships

Many of you know that I have always believed in what President Franklin D. Roosevelt said:

“People working together as a group can accomplish things which no individual acting alone could ever hope to bring about.”

This statement is a principle that underlies much of our work. Those of us who serve in local government are especially aware that if we hope to accomplish anything, we must build relationships that we can turn to when issues arise, when we need to get legislation passed, or we need funding, or advice, or resources beyond our own, or especially when we just need accurate information--- the value of being able to pick up the phone and get an answer is “priceless.”

Building relationships has been an important part of our first year. We have developed a good working relationship with our County Council that has enabled us to move forward together. We respect each other’s different perspectives while we focus on solving problems and working together on behalf of the people of Maui County.

The same is true with our congressional delegation, our Governor, and our State legislators. We have spent time listening, talking together and learning how we can best help each other on behalf of the communities we represent. Relationships developed with State Civil Defense, the National Guard and FEMA have also been very important in the past year.

I value the great connections we have with our community’s non-profit organizations and look forward to another year of working in partnership with them to fill the many needs of our citizens.

Our ability to establish meaningful relationships is at the core of our success in a number of ways. I am pleased to join with Hawaii's three other Mayors in forming the Hawaii Council of Mayors. Together we expect that our unified legislative

package focusing on affordable housing, homelessness, and the re-hiring of retirees will bring help to our counties on these very tough issues.

Critical challenges of 2007

We will need these relationships to help us deal with the challenges ahead. In 2007, the most critical of these were:

WATER

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE

and RENEWABLE ENERGY

These are complex issues that will require long term attention and significant resources.

WATER

We are faced with serious water source and storage needs that will take many years to address. The development of sufficient water resources to serve our existing population and agriculture will require many resources from within and beyond our county. Because we recognize that all our needs and challenges won't be met by ourselves, we recently hosted a meeting with over a dozen federal and state agencies to reach out to them for support and assistance. Their support and guidance will be important in the years to come.

The Department of Water Supply is currently completing a well, named Kupaa, in the Waihee aquifer. We hope to see it in operation within one year. It will enable us to spread out the pumping in the Waihee aquifer. Which means that we will continue to have water provided from this source for a longer period of time

We have requested state and federal funding to assist the county with upcountry water storage. In recent months the department established that the upcountry water system is in full compliance with EPA water quality standards and worked with the County Council to pass legislation that will enable the department to manage water more efficiently and effectively.

The department has also reduced review time for residential and commercial building permits.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Our County has a tremendous need for affordable rentals and affordable homes. We are implementing the Workforce Housing Policy passed by our County Council in late 2006. The Department of Housing and Human Concerns began reviewing building permits and subdivision applications to determine applicability to the new policy that went into effect in 2007 and we have signed the county's first workforce housing agreements that will bring homes to Makawao and Molokai. As more subdivision projects progress, additional agreements will result in more affordable housing.

DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

In October 2006, Maui felt the impact of a serious earthquake that hit Kipahulu and Kaupo the hardest. When we took office a few months later, those communities were facing the hardship of having their one access road closed due to hazardous conditions created by the earthquake of 2006. We assessed the situation and began a series of community meetings. Multiple county agencies were involved and continue to be involved. Stan Zitnik, an Executive Assistant from my office, was assigned the role of coordinating recovery efforts for the County. We contacted and met with FEMA representatives, County and State Civil Defense, the National Guard, and many other community and State agencies to put together plans for community assistance, major bridge repairs, restoration of undermined roadways, and mitigation of significant rockfall hazards. Our Department of Public Works has also played a major role in contracting and overseeing this work. This effort has taken and will continue to take many hours and resources, but it must be done in order to restore a safe and reliable connection with Kipahulu and Kaupo. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of many, we look forward to the anticipated reopening of the historic Pi'ilani Highway this year.

2007 brought an unusual amount of disaster incidents.

- On January 12th, barely two weeks in office, we were under a Tsunami Watch
- The Polipoli Forest Reserve fire began about two weeks later on January 23
- The Olowalu fire started June 27 and on July 3rd we had the Lahaina fire
- The beginning of December brought severe storm conditions
- And who could forget the scare that Hurricane Flossie brought?

Last year became a true test of our preparedness as government – and an outstanding example of how our communities support each other in times of crisis and great need.

On December 4th, Maui County experienced a triple-threat of extremely high wind, high surf and torrential rains. Nearly every corner of our county was affected. Our

residents and visitors experienced massive flooding, widespread phone, water, and power outages, rockfalls, mudslides, closed roads and parks, damaged vehicles, homes and facilities, school closures, and lost business. When I reflect on the disaster conditions, I am reminded of how fortunate we were to not have lost any lives or experienced serious injury.

I cannot say enough about how grateful I am for the assistance of those who stepped forward to help their fellow citizens in need during each of our natural disasters last year. While there are so many unsung heroes, I would like to recognize the good works of our partners in emergency response. The Red Cross, the Hawaii National Guard, the State Civil Defense, state agencies such as the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the State Department of Transportation, Maui Visitors Bureau, American Medical Response, Windward Aviation, state airport fire fighters, the rangers of the National Park Service, and the Coast Guard.

What the public may not see, are the countless county and state workers who join the emergency responders to assist. They, too, leave their families and homes to provide help. Public Works, Environmental Management, Water Department, Parks Department and Civil Defense employees are called upon during and after any public safety incident to help meet immediate needs and restore safe conditions.

The Mayor's office staff provided 24-hour phone coverage at the county's civil defense emergency operating center for three days as the December storm escalated. Many other department employees were on stand-by, ready to do whatever it would take to help. Francis Kau, First Assistant to the Managing Director, has been coordinating recovery efforts and working with County, State and Federal agencies.

A true example of the heart and soul that our community has lies in the way our citizens respond in a time of great need. For example, whenever there is a large scale fire incident, many local construction companies immediately offer the assistance of their heavy equipment. Without being summoned, companies like Goodfellow Brothers, HC&S, Hawaiian Dredging Construction, Kaono`ulu Ranch, Molokai Ranch, Parsons RCI Construction, Diamond B Ranch, TMC General Contracting, Ulupalakua Ranch, West Maui Land Co, and TJ Gomes Trucking show up with heavy equipment and trained operators to work with emergency first responders.

Throughout the year, we strengthened our ties with the media, creating an exceptional relationship to help each other get information out to the public during emergencies. We enjoy a partnership with radio, print and television outlets that is vital and serves the public unselfishly. To better communication between agencies and companies, the county initiated a gathering of public information officers – opening a direct line of information-sharing between state agencies, private

companies and the county. This direct link has created a level of cooperation that the community benefits from in times of disaster incidents.

In emergencies, we have been able to count on County employees, state agencies, federal partners, private businesses, community organizations and good neighbors. I have come to deeply appreciate and respect the sound relationships the county has built with each and every one.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Maui already leads the state in renewable energy systems through wind power, biomass, solar water heating, biodiesel, small hydro-electrics as well as residential and commercial photovoltaic installations. To develop a foundation for future action, last fall we held a three-day Energy Expo. An unprecedented assembly of experts in climate change and renewable energy were brought together with government officials, educators, students and visionaries. They shared their vast knowledge and captivated a sold out audience.

We heard from many cutting edge pioneers, including Peter Kalish, who announced his plans for a wave energy system off Maui's north shore. We also heard more about solar power, wind power, geothermal energy, hydro-electric facilities, oilseed crops, waste-to-energy systems, plug-in hybrids, green building designs and more. One of the most inspiring parts of the conference was the group of Maui students who shared their ideas on innovative energy projects.

We learned from them and built and strengthened relationships for future action. Maui County's Energy Commissioner, Dr. Victor Reyes, and others in our Office of Economic Development are to be congratulated for such a successful and enlightening conference.

It has been amazing to witness how the Expo has generated its own kind of energy in our community. We have begun to work with Expo participants to establish five working groups that will focus on:

- Renewable resource development
- Green workforce development and education
- Energy and transportation infrastructure
- Efficiency and conservation in county facilities & operations
- Green house gases and carbon emissions

These working groups will be producing plans that will reflect the enthusiasm the Expo has created and continue to energize public and private partnership – moving us towards energy independence.

DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Here are some other highlights from this past year:

CORPORATION COUNSEL

The Department of Corporation Counsel continues to assist departments and the County Council with legislative matters and legal services. The department has drafted over seventy legislative bills for ordinances and successfully prevailed in defending the County in a number of major lawsuits, including the Montana Beach case.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Our newest department, the Department of Environmental Management, coordinated with the US Army Corps of Engineers, the successful removal of the military ordnance at the Molokai Landfill. The department also undertook the difficult task of setting up and operating a temporary debris staging and reduction site to handle the massive amount of debris caused by the December storm. The site took in over 10,000 cubic yards of storm debris that came from places like roadways, parks and culverts. This equates to nearly 800 truckloads.

With the support of Council Chair Hokama, the department worked with Lanai Company to draft a long awaited agreement that would allow the county to construct improvements required by EPA at the Lanai landfill.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

From the Department of Finance came one of the most notable of our 2007 milestones. The County has received an unprecedented bond rating upgrade from all three credit rating agencies. In this time of an uncertain economy in the nation, this is an exceptional recognition of the County's creditworthiness and accountability. Better financial ratings translate into lower borrowing costs, resulting in more funds available to support other county services.

The finance department worked with the Council to create the Post-Employment Obligations Fund to cover future health benefits for retirees. Maui County is the only county in Hawaii to have this fund.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Department of Fire & Public Safety was kept extremely busy last year responding to the large number of fire incidents. Over 10,000 acres were burned in the County just from nine major fires last year.

With the help of close to a half million dollars in federal funding, the department's new Hazardous Material Unit increased the County's capability to respond to public safety incidents.

Last year, with community input, a process for selecting a site for a new Haiku fire station began. A site was selected and, with the approval of our County Council, has been purchased. We now are taking steps to move toward development of this long-needed fire station in Haiku.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & HUMAN CONCERNS

In addition to the Department of Housing and Human Concerns' work on the Workforce Housing Policy, millions of dollars in grants were awarded to our non-profit partners. The department's Early Childhood Resource Center registered close to 2,000 new participants in its early literacy program, The Imagination Library, putting one new book a month in the homes of Maui children under five years old.

DEPARTMENT OF LIQUOR CONTROL

The Department of Liquor Control completed client training as required for liquor permittees. The 250 million dollars in liquor sales in Maui County is the highest of the neighbor island counties. The department does an outstanding job in enforcing laws and working to reduce underage drinking.

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

In the Department of Management's MIS (Management Information Systems) Division, the central data center underwent major expansion and renovation resulting in expanded services and data security.

MIS assisted the Wastewater Reclamation Division's implementation of a Maintenance Management System that will serve as a model for other departments with large maintenance responsibilities.

In the GIS (Geographic Information System) Division of the Department of Management, a new global positioning system base station is enabling staff to collect and verify mapping data while in the field. This will ultimately assist in disaster planning and more accurate mapping.

PARKS & RECREATION

The Department of Parks and Recreation installed new lighting at the Lahaina Civic Center tennis courts as well as accessible pathways at Kamaole I and III beach parks.

The department implemented the Youth Sports Program in all districts for basketball, volleyball, flag football and girls softball which included training and certification of all volunteer coaches with an emphasis on good sportsmanship and participant safety.

PERSONNEL SERVICES

Recruitment efforts increased countywide In the Department of Personnel Services and the implementation of consultant recommendations on recruitment resulted in increased numbers of applicants for county positions, and the successful one-stop recruitment for police officers was expanded to include Police Radio Dispatchers.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Through our Planning Department, the Countywide Policy Plan of the General Plan was processed through the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), the three island planning commissions and is presently with the Maui County Council for review. The first ever Maui Island Plan will soon be presented to the Maui GPAC.

The Department prepared and processed five legislative bills related to short-term vacation rentals through the three island planning commissions. These bills have been transmitted to the Maui County Council for review.

The Zoning Administration and Enforcement Division has established a priority permit review system that has reduced review time for residential and “simple” commercial to approximately 30-45 days and there is currently no backlog on new subdivision reviews.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Police Department continues its efforts to secure a building for a new County Morgue. The new facility is expected to begin operating a year after construction begins on building renovations.

Radio re-banding has been completed for the Police Department and other countywide agencies, resulting in a more dependable and secure communication system.

A success of the Maui Police Department is the Positive Outreach Intervention Program (POI). It is the only program that provides nearly immediate consequences for juveniles arrested for crimes. The program is a model for other jurisdictions and has a graduate recidivism rate of 10%. With illegal drug use continuing to be at the root of most crimes throughout Maui County, the Police Department's efforts and its partnership with federal and state agencies give us a

measure of success in the war against drugs and the devastating effect it has to our island families

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

At this time last year, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney had 469 felony cases pending a screening decision, currently there are 227 cases pending screening. The department has also dramatically reduced its backlog of cases in the juvenile division. One year ago there were 455 cases pending a screening decision – today, there are 101 cases. These are extraordinary accomplishments for the department and one that serves victims of crime well.

PUBLIC WORKS

In order to expedite the planning review process, the Department of Public Works implemented a new procedure that involved having plans reviewed by districts and by staff teams.

The department assisted with the removal of over 10,000 cubic yards of mud and debris caused by the December storm, worked with the National Guard in post-storm cleanup efforts and assessed the integrity of roads and culverts damaged by the storm.

The Public Works department designed and oversaw the rockfall mitigation project in Manawainui, Kaupo, an area damaged by the 2006 earthquake.

TRANSPORTATION

Our Transportation Department increased its service last year by adding four new Maui Bus commuter routes for island employees. Two for Wailuku to Kapalua, one for Makawao to Kapalua and one for Kihei to Kapalua.

By deploying eleven new state-of-the-art buses we are able to serve a projected 35% increase in passengers. Our buses were boarded 865,000 times in the last fiscal year and are now projected to accommodate over 1.3 million riders in the next fiscal year. The department anticipates that it will be able to operate the transit at cost of \$3.75 per person, 53 cents lower than in FY 2007.

CDBG

Our Community Development Block Grant program managed 31 projects that were granted federal funds through CDBG - including a half-million dollars for land and building acquisition for the Maui Food Bank

CIVIL DEFENSE

Last year, the Maui County Civil Defense Agency facilitated the acquisition of \$600,000 in State Homeland Security Grant Funds and \$4 million in federal funds to increase capacity in communication technology. They also continue to conduct community training programs such as the Community Emergency Response Team programs (CERT). This important program provides the county with more community partners in emergency response.

WHAT'S AHEAD FOR 2008

While our economy continues to be strong, we can expect a slower growth in the visitor industry and other business developments.

However, I am pleased to say that after losing the title in 2006, in 2007 Maui regained the Best Island in the World designation from the readers of the prominent Conde Nast Travel Magazine.

A Tibetan proverb tells us that:

“if you want to know your future,
look at what you’re doing in this moment”.

What we do each year impacts the next generation, so we must be mindful that what we do or don’t do will be inherited by them.

I believe that the significance of our work is measured by the everyday needs of our residents. In this second year of my administration we will continue to work with our public and private partners and establish new relationships that will help in addressing some of our essential needs. We will:

- Diligently seek water sources and facilities to meet our county’s current and future needs
- Support development of affordable housing
- Continue to address issues surrounding homelessness
- Examine the important agriculture lands survey for next step action
- Develop recommendations for the updated Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan
- Develop plans and design for a new police station in South Maui
- Complete the development currently underway for the Maui Island Plan – a first of its kind that will define urban growth boundaries and support the county’s General Plan

So that the quality of everyday life for our residents is met by our ability to meet their needs, I have set a course that will maintain what we began last year.

My administration's priorities will continue to include the seven areas I have put forward since I took office 14 months ago:

In our Economy

Finding a balance between an economy strong enough to provide satisfying jobs and a community that includes sufficient housing that is affordable and livable

And by diversifying through sustainable technologies, agriculture and higher education while supporting our primary economic engine, our visitor industry

In Renewable Energy

Increasing our renewable energy resources and increasing energy efficiencies to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel

In Transportation

Expanding our current public transportation system to meet the growing needs of our residents

In our Water Supply

Planning, developing and managing a sustainable domestic water supply

In delivering Public Service

Providing effective public services within fiscally responsible systems and with environmentally sound operations and practices

and In the area of Environment

Preserving and protecting the spectacular beauty and natural resources of our land and water, our open spaces

Through a task force the County initiated, we will join the rest of the world in celebrating the International Year of the Reef. In looking towards our future, our ocean treasures must be protected as part of our legacy to generations that will come after you and I are long gone. There are more than 7,000 forms of marine life in Hawaii's coral reefs and near shore waters and we have one of the last remaining large-scale marine wilderness areas on the planet.

For centuries, native Hawaiians have said:

“if you care for the ocean – the ocean will care for you”

Our host culture's history and traditions shows us that decisions were made by seeing what impact it would have on the next seven generations, while always being mindful of what came before them. I invite you to make this year the year you learn more about Hawaii's reef system and what you can do to help safeguard

it - a precious part of Hawaii Nei that was here before us and should remain after us.

These are the ways that we can all take care of Maui County – our County.

CREATING THE FUTURE FOR OUR NEXT GENERATION

We are a beloved county of diverse neighborhoods, distinctive cultures, varied religions and different histories. Yet we are connected by knowing that through cooperation and respect we are able to achieve a better life for those that come after us.

Those that came before us – the ancient Polynesian voyagers, immigrant plantation workers, the veterans who fought wars for our freedom, and our own parents – transformed everyday challenges as well as epic ones into opportunities. Using each challenge to show how resilient they were. Our county draws upon that history to meet contemporary challenges that are also opportunities.

Although there are four islands in our county we are one county. No matter what our county has faced throughout its history, our community has chosen to look ahead to a future where the community wins by working together. When government and community work together great things are done and these will be inherited by our next generation.

Each and every day we have an immense opportunity to ignite the fire that drives our community to succeed. We celebrate the successes of our community and I marvel at the accomplishments of our talented youth. Today I welcome the winners of the annual Na Mele o Maui, who are here today to share one of their winning songs. These 4th and 5th grade students are from Kamehameha School Maui.

Under the direction of Clark Tuitele, they present to you their winning mele, Pa Lehua.

Before they lead us in Hawaii Aloha, I would like to thank all of you for coming today and for everything you do to help create a positive future for Maui County.

Our youth have entrusted us with their future and like them I am very proud to call this my home. I know you are too. We must come together and draw upon our County pride to accomplish great things. Not just for ourselves, but for our coming generations. Mahalo and Aloha.

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